



AMY DAVIS, THE BALTIMORE SUN

Sandy McCombe Waller coaches Norris Turner, 68, on a new exercise device designed to help stroke patients recover function.



MARLA ARNDT
fitness bootcamp

A few rules for losing weight

Over the past 10 years, I have had the opportunity to help many people lose weight, add exercise to their daily lives and make permanent healthy lifestyle changes.

Usually, it is a private journey. But over the past six months I have worked with Matt Shurrie in a very public forum. He embarked on a personal mission to finally take control of his life. He also made the decision to share his journey through the Mercury and blog about his experience. I just finished reading Matt's final blog at the Mercury's website — visit it to find a link to his new one.

Here is an excerpt from the final Matt vs. Fat blog posting:

"Over the past six months not a day has passed when I haven't pinched myself — almost stunned by the success of this fitness challenge. The truth is that it has been overwhelming. But don't be fooled. I fully realize that this is not the end of the road. So, what's next? That seems to be the big question facing me in the coming days, weeks and months. I wish I had a good, clear answer. Truth is I'm not sure at the moment. Although I've got some ideas. It's the one question that Arndt keeps asking me — almost daily. I have assured her that I have no plans to go back to being the person I was before this project got started. One thing is certain — I won't be flying to an aircraft carrier any time soon to unveil a banner reading Mission Accomplished. The real challenge before me is how to keep going — and reach even better weight loss goals. (I still want to one day return to that 200-pound mark — and I don't think it's out of the question) . . . A final thank you to everyone for visiting this blog over the past six months. It's been an incredible ride — but one that certainly isn't over."

Well, Matt, you should be proud of yourself! You made some fabulous changes over the past six months.

The battle isn't over, though. In fact, a new one has just begun. There is no magic pill. I have armed you with all the knowledge and tools to continue with your new healthy lifestyle.

You gained new habits over these months but now need to create some new ones. This is when you need to plan more than ever. Having someone to be accountable to certainly helped keep you on track. When you had slip-ups with food choices and lack of workouts I did my best to motivate you to continue.

I have come up with strategies to make sure those pounds stay off for good. Think of these as your commandments for daily living and you'll reach your goal.

- **Keep exercising.** Your body needs to move daily.
- **Weigh yourself regularly.** Every week.
- **Be ready to handle setbacks.** Set a 'red flag' weight and don't ever go above it.
- **Keep a food journal.**
- **Be accountable.** Continue with your blog. Find an exercise buddy/walking group.
- **Drink your water.** Beverage calories can add up.
- **Eat breakfast every day.** Get your metabolism engine running.
- **Plan, or plan to fail.** Plan meals, grocery shopping and workouts.

It has been a pleasure working with you, Matt. You proved to yourself you could make great changes to your body and health. You also inspired many others!

Guelph-Based personal trainer Marla Arndt owns and operates Frameworks Fitness Studio. She can be reached via her website at www.frameworksfitness.com. Her column appears every other week.

Device helps stroke patients regain skills

Meredith Cohn

BALTIMORE — After Norris Turner's stroke a decade ago, he would tuck his right arm into his pocket to get the nearly useless limb out of the way. Now the 68-year-old from suburban Columbia can use the arm to play catch with his grandson and hit a golf ball nearly 30 metres.

Turner's progress has made him something of a poster child for a machine called the Tailwind. It's licensed and for sale by researchers from the University of Maryland who invented it and a local entrepreneur who believed it could help patients like Turner.

"We think there is tremendous potential for this device," said Sandy McCombe Waller, who worked on the Tailwind with colleague Jill Whitall. Both are professors in the University of Maryland School of Medicine's Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science.

Turner was a test subject.

"Mr. Turner didn't start high functioning but has been able to return to recreational activities," she said. "He can grab things with his arm, drink from a cup. They sound like little things, but they are huge things."

Strokes affect about 750,000 people a year in the U.S., according to the American Stroke Association. In Canada, more than 50,000 strokes occur annually. They are the third-largest killer behind heart disease and cancer, and the top cause of adult disabilities.

Clamped to a table at the university, the Tailwind looks like not much more than a set of metal arms with handles. A stroke patient sits in front of it, grasps the handles and repeatedly runs them back and forth to a metronome, a steady, audible beat that facilitates movement. Unlike a bicycle, the limbs move inde-

pendently, so a weak arm cannot depend on a functioning arm.

According to two studies printed in Stroke and the Journal of the American Medical Association, patients who use the device begin to show progress after about six weeks.

The repetition retrains the part of the brain that controls motor skills but was damaged by a stroke. A stroke on the left side of the brain affects the right arm, and vice versa. Like muscle strengthening, weakened motor pathways eventually become stronger and patients make smoother movements.

The machine tilts up, the arms extend and the metronome pace increases to make it more challenging. The eight-minute sets were exhausting for Turner, but the workouts have been worth it, he said one recent day as he demonstrated his routine at the university, moving his arms out and back in tandem, and then one after the other.

"Results come in spurts," said Turner, who participated in a Tailwind study two years ago and has continued working with the machine at the university and at home.

To market the product, the inventors were matched with an entrepreneur who participated in a program at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County that has been funded in part by a grant from the U.S. National Science Foundation. Called ACTIVATE, it trains women in business and hooks them up with technology invented at Maryland universities. So far, 25 companies have been formed, according to David J. Fink, director of entrepreneurial services for the university's research and development park.

Since 2005, companies have launched or are forming to sell products including DNA-based therapies for ovarian cancer,

pain therapies, test kits for monitoring melanoma and a device to remotely monitor infants' and the elderly's vital signs.

Kris Appel, a former linguist at the U.S. National Security Agency, bought the Tailwind license and plans to begin selling the machines in earnest in the next few weeks.

Those involved in stroke therapy say there isn't much else available for such patients. There are even fewer options that are portable and can be taken home.

The device's success in studies was notable for showing "neuro-plasticity" — recovery of brain function years after a stroke, said R. Samuel Mayer, who did not take part in the Tailwind research. Mayer is a physician adviser for the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Johns Hopkins Hospital and medical director of the hospital's inpatient rehabilitation.

"Traditionally, people thought that little recovery occurs from stroke after three to six months," he said. "We now know that rehabilitation can help people even years later recover some function."

It's not clear how clinics and individuals will respond to the \$2,400 US price tag on the Tailwind. Formal marketing begins in the next few weeks, and none have sold yet.

Mayer said other promising therapies are being studied for low- and higher-functioning patients, some of which the Tailwind researchers are involved in testing.

"The important issue is to keep patients active after stroke," he said.

Turner plans to continue working on his Tailwind five days a week. He also plans to keep tossing a ball to his grandson.

The Baltimore Sun

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